19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

vented from enjoying a good night's rest by the number of other occupants. My cook prepared my meals at the little fireplace in the middle of the room. The villagers sat about and visited with us. When meal-time came the women and girls brought in their generous supplies of food, consisting of two large trays piled high with snow-white steaming rice, besides smaller trays and bowls filled with several kinds of curry, "ngape" water, and vegetables. The visitors were expected to eat something from every dish. While the meal was in progress the hosts withdrew, except one or two elders, the women returning afterwards to clear away the dishes and uneaten food with the polite remark that their guests had eaten very little. Many shared in receiving us; and we were spared the embarrassment, not to say the danger according to our belief, of violating the tabu that prevented our being entertained at the time by a family in their own quarters.

Besides serving as a guest-chamber, the "blaw" has another important use, namely, as the gathering-place for the young men of the village. When a boy becomes a youth ("hpo tha hkwa taw"), he is expected to spend his leisure time in his parents' room, working and eating with them, as seems to be the custom. When evening comes, he repairs to the "blaw" to be with his fellows and to sleep there. This is a custom that is common among the Kachins of Burma and many other tribes of the Orient. Among the Kachins the "blaw" is a place of license. The Brecs also allow a great deal of liberty to their young people, and evidently advantage of it is taken by them. But among the Sgaw Karens, at any rate, the girls remain with their mothers. There is no common room for the girls, or any place where both youths and maidens may meet for restrained intercourse. No doubt among the Karen the use of the "blaw" as a club-room is for the purpose of keeping the young men together and separating them from the young women, thus preventing offence of the "by na," which would bring a curse upon the soil and damage to the crops.

It has never been possible for parents to prevent all social intercourse between young people of the opposite sexes. In fact, it has hardly ever been attempted. As is shown elsewhere in this volume, there are occasions among the Karen when the sexes mingle, for example, on fishing expeditions and at marriages, funerals, etc. If, however, a youth desires to visit a maiden, etiquette prescribes the way: he must take his harp ("t'na"), appear before her house, and serenade her. Sitting down, he sings to the accom-

ie Not being allowed in family rooms during the Bgha feast -- Analyst)